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HOME-MADE MOSAIC WORK.

BY ZEPHOS.

DOES this seem almost an impossibility to many of our readers? It would not be surprising if such were the fact, as the art has been classed for years among the higher branches of decorative work.

As a matter of course, this paper will not allow of its being carried to any great extent into the higher branches, in fact not beyond its simpler rudiments, but far enough to tempt some diligent and ambitious art amateur to further effects on his or her own behalf.

Mosaic is a work of art in which a design is produced by joining together small pieces of hard substances either naturally or artificially colored. Stone and glass are generally used for the purpose, the former predominating, but of late years mosaics of stained glass for the decoration of the interior surfaces have become quite popular, and in many cases carried out quite successfully.

The art of mosaic-making is of extreme antiquity; it being almost instinctive with man, as soon as he attains any idea of decoration, to lay parti-colored stones together in patterns.

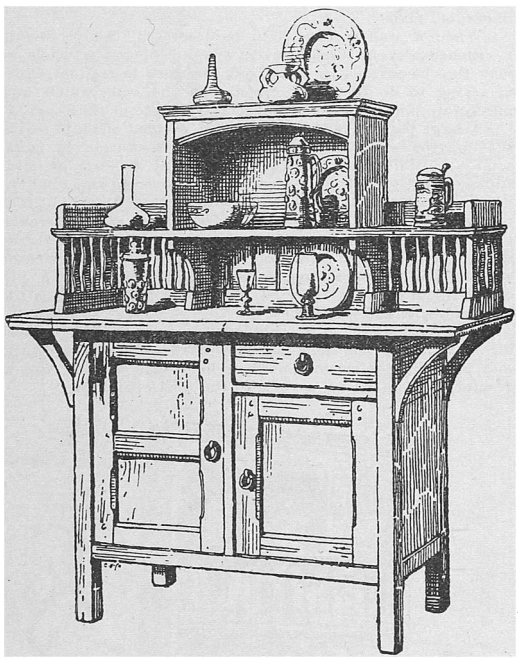

FIG. 3.—BUFFET.

In its simplest and crudest adaptation it may be formed into patterns of black and white pebbles, which, with a setting of close-cut grass, may be very effective, and a neat addition to a well-kept garden.

But for our interior decoration; how shall we set about it? Simply enough.

Let us suppose we have a small vestibule or entry way that we propose to decorate in this manner, during leisure hours.

To begin systematically, we must first lay out our plan or pattern to work from. Let this be on a scale large enough to show the small details, sufficiently large enough to enlarge upon in the working drawing.

Now, supposing our vestibule to be 8 feet by 8 feet in size (quite a small one, but plenty large to begin on), now this is perfectly square in shape, we will divide it into four equal parts or quarters—as shown by the drawing—for several reasons; to-wit: as the design is but a repetition of this quarter section, it will only be necessary to draw a full size detail of this portion, thus saving time; again this will be as much ground probably as the amateur can cover at a time, when he gets down to the actual work of inlaying.

Now lay out the quarter section detail carefully the full-sized required, showing each piece, and indicating in color (water colors) the general tones in their proper places.

Next, as to the materials to work with; get together all the pieces of colored marble stone and bits of colored tiles, that will be necessary to cover the space. These may readily be obtained; the tiles are broken bits of no use to the dealer, who will probably allow you the pick of the workshop waste, and any marble yard will afford clippings in many colors.

Now, with a bricklayer's hammer, which has one end chisel-shaped, and the other square, break your bits into the shapes and sizes required, with a smart, sudden tap; the morsel to be fractured being held by the thumb and finger, on a small square bar of iron; the top of a large spike driven into a solid base, will answer the purpose nicely.

To prepare your floor for working, remove the top flooring, with the exception of a narrow strip of wood all around the space next the wall, as shown on the drawing.

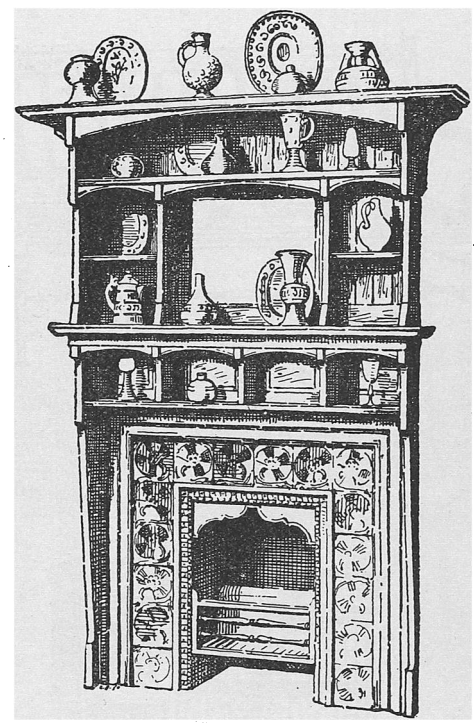

FIG. 4.—DINING-ROOM MANTEL.

Take as much space as you think you can cover in the time allowed by circumstances for the laying, and cover with a mosaic cement, composed of powdered stone, lime, and linseed oil, to the thickness of probably one-quarter of an inch. When set, this is again covered with a layer of plaster of Paris. Having your pattern before you, lay it lightly over the cement and prick through the outline into the plaster, or better yet, use the pattern wheel, a drawing of which is shown here.

The different bits and pieces of marble and tiles should be sorted out according to colors, in little trays or boxes so as to be at hand when needed for speedy use. Now, select your colors and proceed to lay out your pattern, with great care, but as much speed as possible, as the cement dries quite quickly, first dipping the piece in liquid cement before laying in place—this process being repeated until the design is finished.

The next step is to remove with a sharp thin chisel, all the plaster of Paris that appears above the surface of the design, and when thoroughly hard and "set," the stone or marble portion of the floor must be "holy-stoned" or rubbed down to an

even surface, of course using care not to rub the glazed surface of any bits of tile that may have been used.

The whole floor may be composed of bits of tile of varied

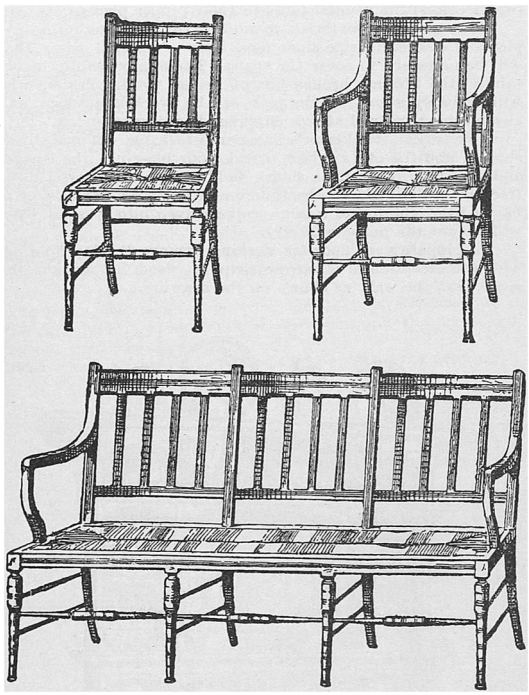

FIG. 5.—SETTEE AND CHAIRS.

colors, using care in the joining, and so no polishing will be required.

Another and a more delicate method may be used for finer work, such as panels for wall spaces, by roughly drawing and tinting the pattern in the required colors on a sheet of paper; arrange carefully the bits of colored glass or marble—and in this case very small pieces may be used—in a box not unlike a compositor's type-case, which must be set up before the worker for ready use.

From this select the required morsel (if too small to handle use a pair of steel "tweezers," or grippers), and after first dipping it into strong cement, affix it in its proper place on the drawing, using care if there is "good" side to the fragment, that it be next to the paper.

When the pattern is entirely covered, pour liquid cement over the back of it, the mosaic being now upside down, with its pattern side covered by the paper, so that the whole adheres in one concrete mass.

When this is thoroughly dry the cement is scraped down to an even surface, the paper pattern washed off, and the panel ready to set into its allotted place on wall or floor, using a bed of plaster of Paris, as in the first instance.

When you wish to repeat one pattern a number of times, the labor of redrawing each pattern may be reduced by placing several sheets of paper under one another, pricking through the outline of the design with a needle into the under sheets; this may also be done by using the pattern-wheel spoken of and illustrated above.

When a wall surface is to be decorated, this process last mentioned may be used to great advantage, and a whole wall may thus be covered by laying out the work in sections, instead of trying to do the work directly on the wall, which would necessitate much labor and unnecessary waste of time.

A large pattern may be made and divided off into sections that may be easily handled. For wall decoration in mosaic, some beautiful effects may be obtained by the use of bits of stained glass, so rich and varied is the covering and quality of this rich material. By using "opaque" glass this light is not necessary behind it to give the desired effect, as the irregularities of surface and rich creamy colors will give all the richness of effect required. If refraction is desirable in some dark corner, cement your pieces of transparent colored glass on to a piece of looking-glass, and reflected light will bring about all the brilliancy you could desire.

Care must be taken, in the first process described, in selecting materials of the same degree of hardness, as otherwise the soft ones are rubbed into a whole before the harder ones are ground down to a level surface in the final operation.

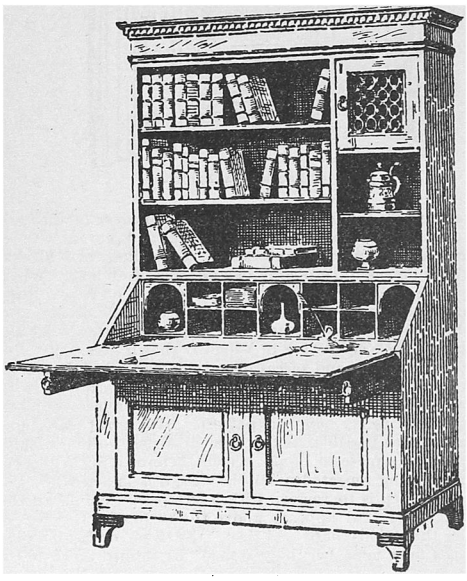

FIG. 6.—A BUREAU BOOKCASE.

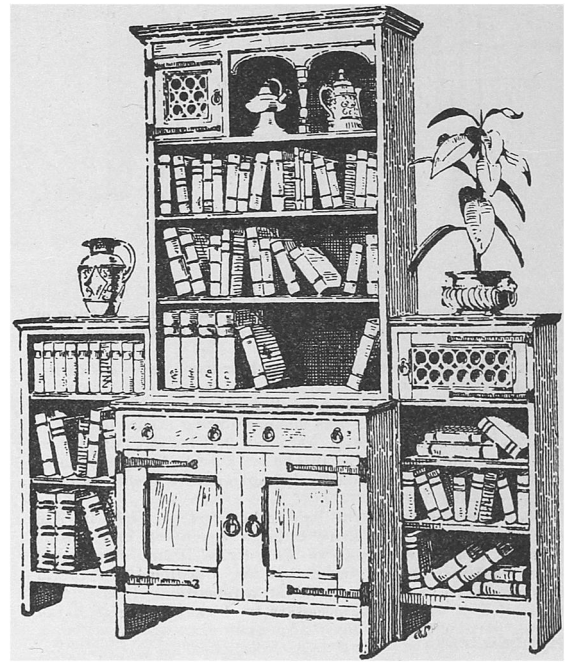

FIG. 7.—A BUREAU BOOKCASE.

Now, why is it not possible in these days of home decorative culture to use this beautiful and refined method of decorating? To be sure it should not be used to excess, and the difficulties in producing it would to a great measure obviate that trouble; but here and there a bit of this beautiful and delicate home work, if executed with mechanical nicety and carried out with artistic refinement, would be a gem in a casket of pearls.

The writer can only suggest the possibilities and the method of employing screens, but all depends upon the execution; for if clumsy and rude, of badly selected materials and colors, it is but a blot, an eyesore. Do not get discouraged if the first attempt is not all you wish, but try again, with hopes of better luck next time.

THE difficulty in arranging the bric a-brac, pictures, and movable articles in a room is that people do not know what they are after. They don't understand the theory of arrangement, and results are consequently hap-hazard—sometimes good and sometimes bad. Now, the human face preserves certain defined rules of expression that can be literally followed in matters of house decoration. Thus: When the lines which form the mouth and eyes remain parallel with the lines of the nose, then the face is in repose; when the lines are lengthened to form downward angles the face expresses joy; when lengthened to form upward angles, grief is depicted. Apply these principles to your home surroundings, and the expression will be the same. Straight lines, as well as curved lines, produce the effect of solidity, durability and support. On this principle wainscotings, doors, and mantels are built in straight and curved lines. But it would be manifestly wrong to furnish a mantel with ornaments, whose tops or proportions give a rounding or straight effect, unless you desire such a room to be stiff and prim.

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EXCELLENT provision may be made for loose papers and magazines in this way: Invest a dollar in a simple bamboo rack, and in the popular fashion of the day paint it with brilliant scarlet or deep yellow Japan paint. Only rich full colors are well adapted to the black and white of ordinary literature gotten up in haste, and too apt to deposit a slight black dust on white or delicate tints.

The joints of the bamboo may be touched with gilding or with colored bronze, yielding an effect worthy extra pains and caretaking. A rich bow of scarlet or yellow ribbon to match the paint, tied at one side or both of the little rack, adds greatly to its appearance. A unique idea is to purchase several dozen tiny bells in various colors, to be bought for a few cents a dozen at any fancy goods shop; string these on a small silken cord to match the ribbon, and twist the cord about the several rods which form the rack; or it may be put around the lower rod only, making a row of jingling bright bells, like fringe at the bottom. What if they do suggest "the fair Ophelia," "Sweet bells jangled out of tune," or a gushing brooklet, babbling as perhaps may some of the loose sheets among the well kept contents of the little rack?

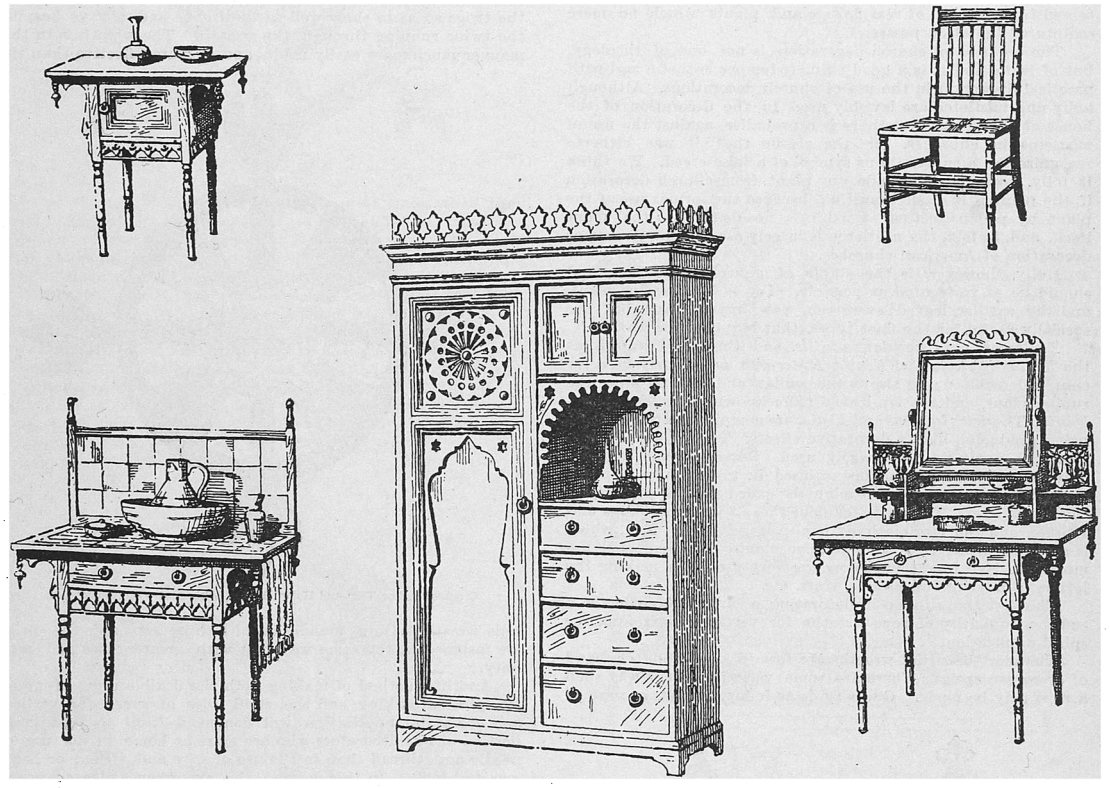

FIG. 8.—BEDROOM FURNITURE.

IT is true that books are better preserved by being shut up behind glass doors, but they do not yield half their benefits in this way. Even a single shelf of books adds to the coziness of a room, and the home that is fully organized will have such a shelf in the guest chamber, as well as in other rooms. A book is often a great boon to a visitor, who may, perhaps, have risen too early for breakfast, or enjoys a solitary hour with some good reading before retiring for the night. If there are a great number of books in the house, and there is no library, be sure and have them arranged in an open bookcase in the parlors. A bookcase can be made of pine boards and stained. With a pretty, straight cover across the top and hanging over the sides, it will be the most attractive object in the room.